

March 18, 2013

Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee:

RE: SB 1117

Regarding SB 1117, my concern is our youth, specifically Guilford's youth. I am part of a broad coalition of groups in Guilford to change the culture of teen abuse of alcohol and drugs in our town. In both 2010 and 2012 we conducted surveys of every student in Guilford in Grades 7-12. We are working hard to change a terrible situation. It will be very damaging to our effort if the legislature makes a joke of marijuana use via medical marijuana legislation for so-called "pain". I believe that may be even worse than full legalization, because it encourages drug users to slide around the law.

It appears the med. marijuana legislation enacted last year contributed to Guilford kids' belief that marijuana is not a problem. In 2010, 22% of Guilford kids in grades 7-12 believed there was no risk or slight risk from using marijuana regularly. After the medical marijuana legislation that percentage has increased to 35% of Guilford kids grade 7-12. There was no similar increase for alcohol, prescription drugs, cocaine, heroin or other illegal substances. Surely none of the legislators believe it is safe for kids to abuse marijuana, but we have a serious problem, and the medical marijuana legislation clearly has made the problem worse.

Of all the social problems we face in Guilford, I believe none are more important than teen abuse of alcohol and drugs and addiction. As I said, we now have data from our surveys of all students grades 7-12 from 2010 and 2012. We have approximately 100 kids in Guilford who appear to be addicted to alcohol, marijuana, heroin or other drugs. These are not kids who occasionally use illegal substances, but approx. 100 kids who are already addicted and who are in a deep hole with a bleak future. The legislature must not take steps that make the problem worse.

Currently a debilitating medical condition means (A) cancer, glaucoma, positive status for human immunodeficiency virus or acquired immune deficiency syndrome, Parkinson's disease, multiple sclerosis, damage to the nervous tissue of the spinal cord with objective neurological indication or intractable spasticity, epilepsy, cachexia, wasting syndrome, Crohn's disease, PTSD or (B) any medical condition, medical treatment or disease approved by the Department of Consumer Protection pursuant to regulations adopted under section 14 of Public Act No 12-55. This act also states: **The Commissioner of Consumer Protection shall establish a Board of Physicians consisting of 8 physicians or surgeons who are knowledgeable about the palliative use of marijuana and certified by the appropriate American board in one of the following specialties: Neurology, pain medicine, pain management, medical oncology, psychiatry, infectious disease, family medicine or gynecology. The board shall review and recommend to the Department of Consumer Protection for approval of the debilitating medical conditions, medical treatments or diseases to be added to the list of debilitating medical conditions that qualify for the palliative use of marijuana.**

As you can see by adding "pain" to this list of medical conditions, it would circumvent the regulatory process in the original bill. It is subjective and vague. Anyone can report pain and then be prescribed medical marijuana. It is sending the wrong message, making a mockery out of this bill and minimizing the importance of strict laws regarding medical marijuana in Connecticut. The process of identifying the list of debilitating medical conditions that qualify for the palliative use of marijuana should be made by medical doctors not legislators and presented to the Department of Consumer Protection for approval.

We are working hard in Guilford to change the culture of teen substance abuse. If legislation does not take this bill seriously, in essence making a joke of the bill by allowing "pain" to be added to the list of debilitating conditions for medical marijuana, our youth will suffer. Connecticut must keep its laws strict to decrease normalization of marijuana among youth.

I am urging you to keep the bill as it has been previously written in the draft regulations and NOT add "pain" as a debilitating condition to the existing list of conditions approved for palliative use of marijuana.

Sincerely,

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